

Cover by Frank Cozzarelli

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**MANHUNT** VOLUME 4, NUMBER 8, August, 1956. Single copies 35 cents. Subscriptions, \$4.00 for one year in the United States and Possessions; elsewhere \$5.00 (in U. S. funds) for one year. Published monthly by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc., 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. Telephone MU 7-6623. Entered as Second Class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y. Additional entry at Concord, N. H. The entire contents of this issue are copyrighted 1956 by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc., under the International Copyright Convention. All rights reserved under Inter-American Copyright Convention. Title registered U. S. Pat. Office. Reproduction or use, without express permission, of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Postage must accompany manuscripts and drawings if return is desired, but no responsibility will be assumed for unsolicited materials. Manuscripts and art work should be sent to Manhunt, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions appearing in this magazine and those of any living or dead person or institution is intended and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in U. S. A.

*It takes only a few minutes to execute a man.  
Unless he has the right kind of lawyer . . .*



# Good-bye, World

BY JACK RITCHIE

EDWARDS SAT on the bunk with his knees close together and sweat glossed the backs of his hands. His eyes were big with long-time fear as he watched me read.

I went through the papers slowly, turning each sheet face down after I finished it. I spent thirty seconds on the last one and then I turned it over too.

I shrugged my shoulders slightly and lit a cigarette. "I guess you've had it," I said. "There's nothing else left."

He leaned forward. "No, Mr.

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*Tom Sullivan*

Hudson. You can try once more. You've got to."

I flipped the burnt match through the bars of the cell into the corridor. "Why not face it. I've done everything that can be done."

Edwards' voice trembled. "Try the governor again. He can stop it."

"He has," I said. "Four times so far."

His head moved in spasmodic jerks. "The Supreme Court again, Mr. Hudson. Please."

"It wouldn't do any good," I said. "Even if we had the time. I've had them refuse to review it twice."

Edwards' knuckles went to his lips. "Justice Barton," he said. "He's in this state now on vacation. He could stop it."

"Maybe," I said. "For a little while."

He got to his feet and he had to lean against the wall. "He's got a cabin near Harville. He's an important man. A big man. The people there would know where it is."

I dropped my cigarette and ground it with my foot. "What am I supposed to show him? I've run through every piddling little irregularity and they're not enough to get you a new trial."

His voice was sharp with panic. "I've got just five hours left, Mr. Hudson."

I glanced at my watch. "Four hours and forty-six minutes."

I put the papers back into my

briefcase and then I stood there thinking and rocking slightly on my heels. "All right," I said, after a while. "I'll try to get to Justice Barton."

He tried to clasp my hand, but I shoved him aside and rapped on the bars.

The guard came and led the way back up the corridor. "The warden wants to see you for a minute," he said.

We went through the gates of the death house and into the sunshine outside.

The guard glanced at me, interest and coldness mingled in his eyes. "What do you do it for?" he asked. "If anybody deserves to die, Edwards sure as hell does."

"I'm a lawyer," I said. "I owe it to my client to try every means at my disposal."

"That sounds real nice, Mr. Hudson. Do you ever dream about the Jeffers kid he butchered?"

We went up the stairs of the administration building.

Warden Hall was waiting in his anteroom. He worked on his cigar with his lips when he saw me. "Did you say your last good-by to Edwards?"

"I don't know," I said. "I may see him again."

He took the cigar out of his mouth. "Do you expect to get a big reputation out of this?"

"I've got a reputation," I said.

"Then it's money."

"I'm not making a fortune from

Edwards, if that's what you mean."

He moved to his office door. "Come into the office." He looked at the guard. "You better come along too, Jim."

We went inside and Mr. Jeffers was standing at the window looking out.

Jeffers turned and his mouth opened slightly when he saw me. He looked at the Warden and then at me again and there was silence.

"If anything happens to me, Warden," I said clearly. "I'll hold you responsible."

Jeffers met my eyes and he licked his lips. Then he nodded, as if to himself, and started walking toward me.

"I'll kill him," Jeffers said. "I'll kill the dirty shyster."

The guard and the Warden moved forward and forced Jeffers into a leather easy chair.

"Easy now, Mr. Jeffers," the Warden said. "I know just how you feel."

Jeffers struggled for a few moments and then became quiet. "All right, Warden," he said. "I promise I won't do anything."

I looked at Hall. "This is why you wanted to see me? You wanted a face to face meeting with the bereaved father and perhaps a few dramatics? Was I supposed to burst into tears of contrition?"

Hall reddened. "You know what I'd like to do, Hudson? I'd like to leave you alone in this room with him. Just for ten minutes."

I thought about it and smiled.

Hall came close to me. "You got a kid about the age of the Jeffers girl. Suppose it had happened to her?"

I didn't say anything.

"Edwards isn't innocent," Hall said. "There's not a chance of it. You know that and I know that."

"Yes," I said. "We know that."

Hall walked away from me and then turned. "Maybe you think he shouldn't die for it? Is that it?"

"No," I said. "He ought to die."

"You've got no use for him yourself and yet you've been trying every trick in the book to keep him from the gas chamber. You've dragged this out for three years."

I regarded him for a moment. "I think I'll be going," I said.

Hall looked at me curiously. "You got some place important to go?"

"Yes," I said. "One more try."

Jeffers' eyes met mine.

"One more," I said. "I'm going to see Justice Barton." I turned to Hall. "You might get a phone call."

I drove back to the city and had a meal before I began the trip to Harville.

I got there at about six-thirty and dropped in at the office of the small weekly to ask about Justice Barton.

I had several cups of coffee and some sandwiches at a small restaurant and then I drove out of Harville. I followed the rutted mountain road for three miles until I came to the turn-off.

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It was dusk when I parked my car in front of the cabin and went to the door.

Justice Barton was a small serene man in a plaid wool shirt and he looked at the briefcase under my arm.

"Richard Hudson," I said.

He nodded and smiled thinly. "I almost expected it. I almost made a bet with myself that you would think of this."

He stood in the doorway for half a minute, examining me, and then he turned and walked back into the cabin.

I followed him and we sat down at the table where a gasoline lantern hissed its bright light.

He looked at his watch. "It's almost seven-thirty. Edwards is supposed to die at eight, isn't he?"

"Yes," I said.

He rubbed the side of his seamed face slowly and stared at me. "You waited until the last minute."

"I didn't think of this," I said. "Edwards did."

His eyes moved to the briefcase.

"It will take at least an hour to go through it," I said.

He smiled tiredly. "New evidence? Prejudiced witnesses? Irregularities?"

I shook my head. "Nothing new, but this is his last chance. It's an hour of your time. Just one hour."

Our eyes met for awhile and then he got up. "I don't have a phone here," he said. "We'll have to go to Harville."

We stopped at a cafe in town and Barton went to the telephone.

I glanced up at the electric wall clock and it was seven-fifty. I ordered two cups of coffee and opened the briefcase.

When Barton came back, he sat down wearily. "I called," he said. "And now they're waiting."

He took a pair of glasses out of his shirt pocket and cleaned them with a handkerchief. He looked at the stack of papers and then began to read.

It was almost nine o'clock when he finished. He took off his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose. "There's nothing here," he said slowly. "Nothing at all to stop it."

I picked up the papers, tamped them into evenness, and slipped them back into the briefcase. I snapped the lock and ordered two more cups of coffee.

Barton stared at his coffee for a minute or two and then he got up. He went to the cashier for change and walked into the phone booth.

I got back to the city at about midnight and drove to the Raven Bar on the west side.

Jeffers was alone in a rear booth and I sat down in front of him.

He smiled at his bottle of beer. "They had to carry him," he said softly. He put his thumb and forefinger about an inch apart. "He was that close. That close and then they stopped and waited."

"It was the first phone call from Barton," I said.

He nodded and kept smiling. "It was just right. I liked it. I liked watching him wait to die."

Jeffers tilted the bottle to his lips and then wiped away foam. "And Lord how he screamed when they dragged him off the bench and went on with it an hour later."

The waitress brought my drink and we waited until she was gone.

Jeffers leaned forward and touched my arm. "He stopped screaming when they closed the door." He nodded his head and laughed. "Then he tried to hold his breath."

Jeffers was quiet for a while, thinking about it. "A thousand deaths," he said softly. "That's what I wanted for him."

"That's what you got," I said.

His hands gripped the bottle. "It makes up for what he did to my little girl, doesn't it, Mr. Hudson?"

"Yes," I said.

His eyes stared into mine. "I

would have killed you if he got off, Mr. Hudson."

"There wasn't a chance of it," I said. "I told you that."

Jeffers put his hand in the pocket of his coat and brought out the brown paper wrapped package. "You did a good job, Mr. Hudson. You drew it out for three years and the last part was the best of all."

I tore open a corner of the package to make sure the money was there, and then I put it in my pocket.

Jeffers looked up as I got to my feet. "Mr. Hudson," he asked. "They always need witnesses for executions, don't they?"

"Yes," I said.

His eyes were bright. "Can anybody get to be a witness? Can I watch again?"

"I don't know," I said. "Why don't you ask?"

I left him smiling to himself.

